

# Sweet Betsy From Pike

American Folk Song

C G7 C C

1. Oh, don't you re - mem - ber sweet Bet - sy from Pike? She crossed the wide  
 2. One ev' - ning quite ear - ly they camped on the Platte, 'Twas near by the  
 3. They soon reached the de - sert where Bet - sy gave out. And down on the

D7 G Am Em F

prai - ries with her hus - band, Ike, With two yoke of ox - en, an old yel - low  
 road on a green shad - y flat. Poor Bet - sy, quite tired, lay down for re -  
 sand she lay roll - ing a - bout. While Ike, in great tears, looked on in sur -

C C G7 C

dog, A tall Shang - hai roost - er and one spot - ted  
 pose, And Ike sat and gazed at his Pike Coun - ty  
 prise: Said, "Bet - sy, get up, you'll get sand in your

REFRAIN C G7 C

hog. Sing - ing too - ra - lee, oo - ra - lee, oo - ra - lee  
 rose.  
 eyes."

C G7 C

ay. Sing - ing too - ra - lee, oo - ra - lee, oo - ra - lee ay.

4. The rooster ran off and the oxen all died,  
 The last piece of bacon that morning was fried.  
 Poor Ike got discouraged and Betsy got mad,  
 The dog wagged his tail and looked awfully sad. *REFRAIN*
5. The alkali desert was burning and hot,  
 And Ike, he decided to leave on the spot:  
 "My dear old Pike County, I'll go back to you."  
 Said Betsy, "You'll go by yourself if you do." *REFRAIN*
6. They swam the wide rivers, they crossed the tall peaks,  
 They camped out on prairies for weeks and for weeks,  
 Fought hunger and rattlers and big storms of dust,  
 Determined to reach California or bust. *REFRAIN*

## SINGING

Tell a story through music in this multi-verse ballad. Six verses could take a long time to sing. How fast should the tempo be? Help students sense the spirit of this song in order to determine a proper tempo.

To add variety to the many verses, small groups of students or soloists could take turns singing the verses with the whole group joining on the refrain.

Are there any vocabulary words or geographical locations that should be researched in order for students to understand the story better? Understanding the story will help the singers sing with interest in the song, enthusiasm for telling the story, and careful articulation so that listeners don't miss a thing.

## PLAYING

Have students experience the three-beat rhythm of the song by keeping time with a pat, clap, snap pattern or a stamp, clap, snap. Help them feel that the first beat is the strong beat.

Select several non-pitched instruments that portray a strong, weak, weak sound and play them lightly as an accompaniment.

Autoharp chords are indicated, but in addition to the three primary chords (C G7 F) there are three additional chords that will need to be learned (D7 Am Em). If the tempo is not too fast, three strums per measure could be played in a strong, weak, weak pattern. At a faster tempo, one long strum could suffice for each measure.

## CREATING

Notice that the two phrases of the refrain are identical. How can students keep them from sounding the same? Suggest dynamic changes, tempo modification, a change in range (there will always be high voices than could sing an octave higher for one of the phrases), the addition of instruments (recorders, tone bells, xylophones, etc.), and even simple vocal harmony.

## LISTENING

The first two phrases begin with the *Do Mi So* triad (C E G). The beginning of the second phrase continues up to *Do* (C). Someone could play those pitches on the tone bells to reinforce the sound. Can students hear that same triad in other songs they know? (Look in *Swing Low, Sweet Chariot*, *Bow, Wow, Wow, When the Saints Go Marching In*, *(So Mi Do) You're a Grand Old Flag*, *(So Mi Do)* and others. The pitches will be different in other keys, but the *Do Mi So* or the *So Mi Do* relationships will be the same.

## CURRICULUM INTEGRATION

This song about a couple headed for California ends without the actual accomplishment. Students may enjoy adding verses to this ballad based on what they know about the California gold rush. Do Betsy and Ike ever strike it rich?

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